

The Army Values Challenge

Major Kenneth Tarcza, US Army

ISSUING AN Army Values card to every soldier is easy but leaders must ensure compliance—consistent demonstration of Army Values by all soldiers. US Army Field Manual (FM) 22-100, *Army Leadership*, clearly states that when it comes to values, internalization rather than demonstration is the goal.¹ Rote memorization of definitions is not enough. There must be a deeper understanding of the spirit behind the rules. Herein lies the Army Values challenge—how should the Army train and measure values internalization?

The historical basis for Army Values stems largely from moral questions raised by the Vietnam War and subsequent incidents that indicate a need for clearly stated values actively incorporated into training.² Current thinking reflects this understanding. Retired US Army Chief of Staff General Dennis J. Reimer writes, “Army values build strong cohesive organizations that, in turn, become the source of strength and solidarity for their members in difficult and turbulent times.”³ FM 22-100 states, “Army values form the very identity of America’s Army, the solid rock upon which everything else stands.”⁴

Ultimately, the Army established the seven Army Values outlined in FM 22-100 and printed on the Army Values card. They are well founded, having appropriate and reassuring similarities to universally accepted moral imperatives. Summarizing the work of philosopher Bernard Gert, author Rushworth M. Kidder identifies 10 universal imperatives: do not kill; do not cause pain; do not disable; do not deprive of freedom or opportunity; do not deprive of pleasure; do not deceive; keep your promises; do not cheat; obey the law; and do your duty.⁵ Kidder also identifies a smaller set of basic commands that have countless applications in business and politics and that hold true in all great world religions: do not kill; do not lie; do not steal; do not practice immorality; respect parents; and love children.⁶

Although the mandate to leaders is for soldiers to internalize Army Values, there are no proven means to either train or measure their internalization. Recent findings of three independent research organizations indicate that current Army leaders hold different values from those held by the nation’s youth—the next generation of soldiers. More troubling, the two sets of values are continuing to diverge.

The Challenge

There is no way to know soldiers’ values when they enter the military. FM 22-100 explains, “your job as a leader would be a great deal easier if you could check the values of a new Department of the Army civilian or a soldier the way medics check teeth or run blood tests. You could figure out what values were missing. . . and administer the right combination, maybe with an injection or magic pill.”⁷ And, although the mandate to leaders is for soldiers to internalize Army Values, there are no proven means to either train or measure their internalization. Recent findings of three independent research organizations indicate that current Army leaders hold different values from those held by the nation’s youth—the next generation of soldiers. More troubling, the two sets of values are continuing to diverge.


During surveys conducted in both 1997 and 1998, the Barna Research Group determined that 75 percent of adult Americans do not believe in absolute standards of right and wrong behavior and 65 percent do not believe in unchanging moral truths.⁸ Barna also determined that the most effective form of education these days is behavioral modeling, indicating that people are most prone to recall what they have seen others do rather than memorize what has been read or said by others. Finally, the surveys

During the Institute's 1996 survey, 85 percent said they had lied at least once and 73 percent said they had lied repeatedly.¹¹ More than 33 percent of high-school students said they would lie to get a good job. During the same survey, 47 percent of all respondents admitted they had stolen something from a store in the previous 12 months. More than a quarter of high-school students admitted that they had committed store theft at least twice. In 1998 the reported theft rate was 39 percent. The survey further revealed that 70 percent of high-school students admitted that they cheated on an exam at least once in the past 12 months. In 1996 the cheating rate was 64 percent. Michael Josephson, president of the Institute, said, "If we keep in mind that liars and cheaters may lie on a survey, it's clear that the reality is even worse than these numbers indicate."¹²

During July and August 1998, registered California voters were surveyed by The Claremont Institute for the Study of Statesmanship and Political Philosophy. The survey indicated that virtually all demographic groups, most by a sizable majority, believe the country is morally on the wrong track. Of those polled, 65 percent believed that the country is on the "wrong track morally"; 81 percent said adultery is never morally right; 58 percent said that homosexual conduct, such as sodomy between two men, was never morally right.¹³

What standards define good or right actions? For soldiers, the standards are Army Values. The amplification of integrity indicates that lawful and moral actions are also right. Soldiers are subject to local, state and federal statutes, presidential orders, superior officers' orders, the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) and all provisions of the Hague and Geneva Conventions. FM 22-100 states that leaders who demonstrate integrity "show consistently good moral judgment and behavior."¹⁴ Finally, right actions conform to the convictions of conscience. Generally speaking, an actions' legality is not difficult to grasp. Either actions are lawful or they are not. Moral issues and convictions of conscience pose far more difficult questions. What are moral actions? What is good moral judgment?

Moral actions are fairly easy to define but difficult to characterize. Moral actions and moral character conform to ideals of right human conduct.¹⁵ The difficulty with characterizing morals—military or otherwise—begins with trying to establish proper human conduct. The definition depends as much on individual understanding as it does on external influences. Is there an absolute proper human conduct? For soldiers, there are moral absolutes, many



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determined that young adults from 18 to 32 years old are the least likely to believe in absolute behavioral standards or unchanging moral truths.⁹

During a 1998 study the Josephson Institute, a public-benefit, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization advocating principled reasoning and ethical decision making, determined that the majority of high school youth freely admit to lying, cheating and stealing within the past year and yet see nothing wrong with their own ethics and character.¹⁰ The findings of this survey, one of the largest ever to focus on the ethics of young people, including more than 20,000 middle and high-school respondents revealed that almost all teenagers admit to lying. Of high-school students surveyed, 92 percent said they had lied at least once in the past year. Seventy-eight percent said they had lied two or more times.

of which are included in FM 27-10, *The Law of Land Warfare*, otherwise known as the law of war.¹⁶ The law of war consists of written provisions, such as the Hague and Geneva Conventions, as well as unwritten customs and common law. Explicit purposes of the law of war include “protecting both combatants and noncombatants from unnecessary suffering” and “safeguarding certain fundamental human rights of persons who fall into the hands of the enemy, particularly prisoners of war (POWs), wounded and sick, and civilians.”¹⁷

Fundamental human rights are those to which humans are absolutely and always entitled. An example pertains to killing captured enemy soldiers. Not only is killing captured enemy soldiers morally wrong—regardless of their entitlement to POW status—it violates the law of war. German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel received Adolph Hitler’s “commando order” to kill enemy soldiers encountered behind German lines but admirably chose to burn the order rather than comply with it, an act of high moral character while serving an immoral government. Though bound by a different set of laws, he responded properly to a moral imperative. Killing POW’s can be considered an absolute wrong for soldiers, as well as a written truth and binding law. Unfortunately, not all situations are as clear.

An instructional scenario in the US Army’s Command and General Staff Officers Course (CGSOC), Fort Leavenworth, describes a situation relevant to current military operations other than war. Soldiers deployed on a humanitarian support mission in an undeveloped nation confront drought, refugees and a regional incidence of human immunodeficiency virus estimated as high as 50 percent. Accordingly, the brigade commander orders soldiers to have only minimal contact with the local population and no contact with wounded civilians. One soldier eventually becomes so upset at seeing badly wounded orphans along the road during his daily supply distribution runs that he stops his truck and provides medical care to some of the injured children. What should happen to that soldier?

First, was the brigade commander’s order lawful? Yes, for it was undoubtedly intended for force protection, not to increase human suffering. Was the soldier’s action legally correct? No. It violated the brigade commander’s lawful order. Were the soldier’s actions morally correct? Arguably, yes and no. The soldier was doing what was necessary to prevent unnecessary suffering to a helpless child, yet he violated his sworn obligation to “obey the [law-

Field Marshall Erwin Rommel (center) discusses the upcoming Allied invasion of France with Colonel General Johannes Blaskowitz, commander of Army Group G, and Field Marshall Gerd von Rundstedt.



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ful] orders of the President and the officers appointed over” him. So what about the soldier?¹⁸

Fundamental Concepts

Soldiers might face many such complexities. To cope, courageous leaders at all levels have the daunting tasks of training, assessing and enforcing Army Values. The first and most critical step to meeting these demands involves recognizing that moral character development is the center of gravity of Army Values training. The values themselves are merely

decisive points, a means to an end. Joint Publication 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*, states, “Decisive points are not centers of gravity; they are the keys to attacking protected centers of gravity. Centers of gravity are the foundation of capability—

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what Clausewitz called ‘the hub of all power and movement, on which everything depends . . . the point at which all our energies should be directed.’ They are those characteristics, capabilities or locations from which a military force derives its freedom of action, physical strength or will to fight.”¹⁹

Note the similarity of this explanation to FM 22-100 and Reimer’s assessment of the importance of Army Values. Army Values are foundation principles on which all else rests—they are the bedrock, the source of cohesiveness and solidarity in difficult times. When all else fails or falls around us, they must remain. This ideal has great power.

After James Bond Stockdale was shot down over North Vietnam in 1965, he was held prisoner in Hanoi for seven-and-one-half years, was tortured 15 times and spent 4 years in solitary confinement. After retiring as a vice admiral, Stockdale wrote about the extortion environment of a prison camp: “What attributes serve you well in the extortion environment? We learned there, above all else, that the best defense is to keep your conscience clean. When we did something we were ashamed of, and our captors realized we were ashamed of it, we were in trouble. A little white lie is where extortion and ultimately blackmail start. In 1965 I was crippled and alone. I realized that they had all the power. I couldn’t see how I was ever going to get out with my honor and self-respect. The one thing that I came to realize was that if you don’t lose your integrity you can’t be had and you can’t be hurt. Compromises multiply and build up when you’re working against skilled extortionists or a good manipulator. You can’t be had if you don’t take the first shortcut, of ‘meeting them halfway,’ as they say, or look for that tacit deal, or make that first compromise.”²⁰

Clearly, Stockdale’s center of gravity—his sustaining principle—was a clean conscience. Beneath that lay an unshakable sense of right and wrong behavior—sound moral character.

Continuing with the center of gravity analogy, moral turpitude is the enemy because soldiers can demonstrate some or perhaps all Army Values and still not be individuals of high moral character. If soldiers routinely exhibit Army Values only while on duty, they have fallen far short of the Army’s intention. In contrast, soldiers who have high moral character on and off duty exemplify Army Values.

The root issue remains. How do leaders effectively train and measure moral character? Appendix E of FM 22-100 discusses the Army Character Development Model and provides a good starting point for training.²¹ With “Be, Know and Do” as watchwords, the Army trains moral character by placing the greatest emphasis where it should be—on leader development and involvement. Ideally, leaders of high moral character themselves are best prepared to tackle values conflicts and education. Such leaders not only exemplify principles of moral living but also inspire and instill the same in others. To recognize this critical responsibility, the Army has incorporated values assessments into the officer and noncommissioned officer evaluation reports.

Character development also requires frequently exercising an individual’s moral intellect to provide moral growth, just as training improves physical fitness. Passing a semiannual physical fitness test does not guarantee excellent fitness, nor does infrequent or mandatory Army Values training do much for moral maturation beyond forcing soldiers to locate and review their Army Values card.

Leaders must understand that when it comes to Army Values training, one size does not fit all. Because soldiers enter the Army at different levels of moral development, it is unrealistic to expect all soldiers to respond similarly to Army Values challenges, even after receiving standardized, initial-entry or follow-on training. Just as tactical training must address both individual and unit collective tasks, Army Values assessments and training must be tailored to reinforce specific individual and unit weaknesses.

Finally, leaders must recognize that Army Values efforts need to engage three different levels within the Army: individuals, units and perhaps most critical, the institution. Current initiatives reflect the assumed state of the Army and are directed primarily toward individuals and units. In contrast, what the Army needs is a long-term, institutional shift to address society’s move away from a shared set of



Release ceremony near Tam Ky, Vietnam, January 1969. US soldiers seem unimpressed by the china-and-flowers treatment from their captors.

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basic values. The institutional Army must anticipate growing challenges to developing soldiers and leaders of character. As it has begun by making the Army Values card standard equipment, the Army must continue to treat daily activities as ongoing opportunities for values training.

Character development must be incessant and seamlessly woven into all other pursuits. The Army Values Homepage echoes this somewhat but only to the extent of encouraging "hip pocket training events."²² The US Air Force's *Little Blue Book* takes this approach further when discussing "The Core Values Continuum."²³ The continuum stresses values as the service's operational fabric—an inseparable aspect of all training. The Army must mirror this approach and expand a top-down, bottom-up and back-and-forth dialogue to ingrain values in every facet of Army life.

For measuring values and character development, the Army has adopted the Ethical Climate Assessment Survey (ECAS) for use within units.²⁴ Unfor-

tunately, currently there is no tool to assess an individual's level of moral development nor standardized approaches for improving individual or unit moral development.

Training Approaches

Beyond understanding Army Values fundamentals, the more difficult task for leaders is conducting meaningful training that goes well beyond rote memorization and minimum standards of behavior. There must be a deeper understanding of the spirit behind the rules. So many potential moral dilemmas exist that soldiers must be fluent in applying as well as reciting Army Values. The following suggestions complement Army doctrine:

- Train/retrain the trainers in Army Values basics. At every level of command, ensure that leaders at all levels understand and can apply each Army Value. Further guidance, suggestions and materials are available on the Army Values Homepage.²⁵ This type of training is well suited to professional-

development sessions.

- Train soldiers to apply the four steps of the Army Ethical Reasoning Model—define the problem; know the relevant rules; develop and evaluate courses of action; choose the course of action that best represents Army Values.²⁶

- Use the techniques outlined in Appendix C of

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FM 22-100 and include Army Values self-assessments for soldiers during periodic counseling.

- Integrate equal opportunity, sexual harassment and consideration of others into Army Values training.

- As suggested on the Army Values Homepage, routinely conduct values hip-pocket training.

- Devote prime-time training to command-directed Army Values events.

- Mandate a values mission essential task list (VMETL) at each level of command to focus character-development efforts.

- Designate aspects of values training or moral readiness as reportable during quarterly training briefings.

- Modify the standard five-paragraph operations order (OPORD) format to discuss moral considerations. Depending on the mission, issues could be addressed under commander's intent, tasks to subordinate units or coordinating instructions. Moral considerations are an item of command interest and should be handled accordingly.

- Establish focused character-development reading lists with realistic goals, such as one or two books a year, for all levels of rank and responsibility. FM 22-100 should head the list; it includes an extensive bibliography useful for choosing other books.²⁷

Training soldiers to apply ethical reasoning also means training them to recognize moral problems. Some moral decisions involve right-versus-wrong distinctions; others are right versus right. As FM 22-100 points out, the latter types are clearly more difficult.²⁸ Kidder identifies four right-versus-right dilemmas so common that they are familiar models:

truth versus loyalty; individual versus community; short-term versus long-term benefit; and justice versus mercy.

Perhaps a situation considered a right-versus-right dilemma is actually right versus wrong and is no dilemma at all. A situation might also be a right-versus-right dilemma and require a determination of the better choice. The situation could even be a "trilemma," a right-versus-right scenario that includes a preferable but unrecognized third course.²⁵ Recall the CGSOC scenario in which a soldier is torn between his commander's lawful order and his own moral conviction. This situation certainly falls into the right-versus-right category and likely even the trilemma category if the soldier considers possible alternatives such as volunteering for duty in the rear. Half of the battle is recognizing the nature of the dilemma. The less soldiers understand Army Values, the more likely they will fail to recognize the full nature of a difficult choice or to respond appropriately.

Institutional Initiatives

For Army Values to have the desired breadth and depth of impact, the institution requires initiatives beyond a card. The Army can begin by implementing a standard for assessing either an individual's moral character or how well an individual has internalized Army Values. This would measure individual understanding of Army Values definitions as well as evaluate how values are applied to realistic situations, likely under a time constraint. Results could be used to classify each soldier's moral development and serve as the basis for establishing Army Values training objectives. Such assessments could be administered at least annually or at a commander's discretion. One starting point might be Lawrence Kohlberg's cognitive developmental view of moral learning and the six associated stages of moral development.³⁰ Using this view as template, the post-conventional level of moral development, where individuals recognize universal ethical principles and adhere to them out of self-respect, would be the ultimate goal. Regrettably, Kohlberg presumed that this level is not reached during childhood or by most adults, which only further highlights the magnitude of the Army's training challenge. The Army Universal Task List (AUTL) should include collective values development and a moral-readiness assessment; common task testing should include demonstrations of soldier understanding of Army Values.

Sparkling soldier interest in Army Values training is a helpful approach. One possibility is computerized

(web-based) "moral marksmanship" training. This approach could use various levels of qualification and increasing levels of difficulty, much as the unit conduct-of-fire trainer provides for combat-vehicle crewmembers. Large pools of randomly selected realistic and actual scenarios with associated questions at various levels of moral difficulty would comprise the qualification gates. Soldiers and units could be recognized for achieving various levels of values aptitude. Another option is to develop Army Values flashcards printed with definitions, vignettes and scenarios, much the same as vehicle- or weapon-identification cards. These could be used for hip-pocket training to hone moral reasoning skills when computers are unavailable or soldiers are deployed.

Leaders should apply an ethical assessment methodology to any significant training event to anticipate and address situations that might tempt good soldiers to make poor judgments. For instance, they could ask, "What opportunities exist for moral lapses during the upcoming equipment inventories and what can be done to promote good choices?" Including a provision for a moral-readiness assessment on monthly unit status reports shows that moral preparation is an item of command interest—an invisible but critical measure of combat readiness. Indicators include subjective intangibles such as morale as well as objective specifics such as

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the number and type of character-related disciplinary actions. Army Values and the core values of the world's major religions are mutually supporting. To say that soldiers are spiritually fit is virtually synonymous with saying that they are morally fit and thus "values fit."³¹

There is an indisputable and compelling need for corporate, internalized Army Values to define moral character and establish standards of behavior. These soldier values are well-founded, universally recognizable moral imperatives. Still, despite their critical nature, Army Values are difficult to train and assess because they are largely intangible. Accordingly, beyond fundamental individual and unit-level values training, the Army requires institutional change to address soldiers' moral condition as society moves away from a traditional understanding of right and wrong. **MR**

NOTES

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2. John W. Brinsfield, "Army Values and Ethics: A Search for Consistency and Relevance," *Parameters* (Autumn 1998), 69-77.
3. General Dennis J. Reimer, "Developing Great Leaders in Turbulent Times," *Military Review* (January-February 1998), 5-12.
4. FM 22-100, 2-2.
5. Rushworth M. Kidder, *How Good People Make Tough Choices* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 90-91.
6. Ibid.
7. FM 22-100, 2-22.
8. *The Barna Report* (Oxnard, CA: Barna Research Group, November-December 1997), 7.
9. The Barna Research Group, "How Americans See Themselves," <www.barna.org/PressHowAmericansSeeThemselves.htm> (18 December 1998).
10. Josephson Institute of Ethics, "98 Survey of American Youth" (October 1998), <www.josephsoninstitute.org/98-Survey/98survey.htm>.
11. Ibid., 1998 Survey.
12. Ibid., 1998 Survey.
13. The Claremont Institute for the Study of Statesmanship and Political Philosophy, press release "US on Wrong Track on Morality and Values, New Study Shows" (28 August 1998).
14. FM 22-100, B-2.
15. Merriam-Webster's *Collegiate Dictionary*, <www.m-w.com/cgi-bin/dictionary> (6 January 1999).

16. FM 27-10, *The Law of Land Warfare* (Washington, DC: GPO, 18 July 1956), 3.
17. Ibid.
18. The consensus of at least one staff group was that the soldier should probably receive nothing more than a formal reprimand, since it is hard to argue that his actions were truly wrong, despite the standing order.
19. Joint Publication 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*, 1 February 1995, <www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/new_pubs/jp3_0.pdf, III-21>.
20. James Bond Stockdale, *The World of Epictetus: Reflections on Survival and Leadership, War, Morality, and the Military Profession* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press Inc., 1986), 20.
21. FM 22-100, E-1.
22. Army Values Homepage at <www.m-w.com/cgi-bin/dictionary>.
23. US Air Force, *The Little Blue Book*, <www.usafa.af.mil/core-value/cv-maistr.html>.
24. FM 22-100, D-1 through D-5.
25. The Army Values Homepage.
26. FM 22-100, 4-8.
27. Kidder's *How Good People Make Tough Choices* fleshes out, in plain language, much of the philosophy required to understand fully the complex world of moral decision making. The US Air Force's *Little Blue Book* is also useful.
28. FM 22-100, 4-9.
29. Kidder, 18.
30. Camille B. Wortman, Elizabeth F. Loftus and Mary Marshall, *Psychology* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981), 266-68.
31. Kidder, 91.

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